

Conference on Disarmament

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
Final record of the one thousand three hundred and fifty-sixth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 June 2015, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Maung Wai.....(Myanmar)

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The President: I call to order the 1356th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, after an eventful week of intense discussions led by the Permanent Representative of Egypt in his capacity as the coordinator of the informal open-ended meetings for structured and substantive discussions on agenda items 1 and 2, with a general focus on nuclear disarmament, I am pleased to meet you in this room for our regular plenary session.

Before we start our exchange of views, allow me to inform you about the discussions and consultations I had with interested member States last week. I would also like to report back to you on the status of activities as they stand today.

This morning there are three points on which I wish to report back to you. First, following a decision adopted under the Moroccan presidency, the informal open-ended meetings for structured and substantive discussions on agenda items 1 and 2, with a general focus on nuclear disarmament, began last week under the coordinatorship of the Permanent Representative of Egypt.

Second, pursuant to the decision on the establishment of an informal working group on the programme of work, the Co-Chair, the Permanent Representative of Finland, has already made a head start. She has met with many delegations and will continue to do so in the coming days. My understanding is that the first informal meeting of the working group will be convened this Friday, 19 June, at 10 a.m. sharp.

Third, following my assumption of the presidency, I have met with interested delegations to explore possibilities for the possible adoption of a draft decision on the establishment of an informal working group to review the methods of work of the Conference. To tell you the truth, the results are not that encouraging but I am still hopeful. I do not feel discouraged. I will continue to seek more meetings as early as possible to make further consultations in that regard.

That is all I have to share with you for now.

I would now like to open the floor. The following delegations have requested to take the floor. In fact, we have only one delegation, and that is South Africa. I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Mancotywa-Kumsha (South Africa): At the outset, my delegation would like to commend you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the support and cooperation of South Africa in executing the Conference's mandate.

Today, my country is celebrating Youth Day. This day is important for South Africa because it provides an opportunity for younger generations to better understand our long-standing struggle for a better country in a more peaceful and secure world. On this important day, we want to rededicate ourselves to the achievement of a world in which our youth will be able to experience the "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" that they deserve, and to which all United Nations Member States recommitted 15 years ago at the dawn of the new millennium. This freedom from fear includes the need to irreversibly and verifiably eliminate the continued threat of annihilation posed by nuclear weapons.

It is concerning that since the use of nuclear weapons 70 years ago, these destructive and indiscriminate weapons have yet to be prohibited and eliminated. It is an anomaly that these weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction that are yet to be subjected to a legally binding prohibition. It is for this reason that my delegation has, since joining the Conference, consistently expressed concern about the lack of agreement on key issues on the Conference agenda that has resulted in a prolonged stalemate. This body was mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to conduct multilateral disarmament negotiations, and anything short of this means that it is not fulfilling its role.

South Africa is disappointed that some delegations are not willing to discuss the working methods of the Conference, as this may have provided us with an opportunity to explore possible ways in which to revitalize the work of this body. If, indeed, the stalemate does not lie with the Conference's methods of work but rather with the political will of certain States to negotiate, it might be necessary for us to consider whether the time has not come for us to suspend the work of the Conference until such time as this political will is created. Our continued engagement in the Conference has been based on our belief that this body has the potential to respond positively to the challenges that confront the international community, and not that it is simply a victim of external realities. Inasmuch as we should not wait for outer space to first become the next theatre of conflict before we consider legally binding measures to address the consequences, we should also not wait for a nuclear weapon detonation before action is taken.

Over the years, South Africa has been participating in the informal discussions in accordance with the schedule of activities and, for the past few years, in the informal working group on the programme of work, even though these discussions do not constitute the substantive work of the Conference. We did that because we were hopeful that they might help us to move beyond the continued deadlock. However, this has not been the case. While we continue to refrain from blocking consensus on these decisions, my delegation sees no benefit in participating in these activities and repeating our well-known positions, which creates the myth of progress in the Conference.

Following the failed outcome of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, South Africa and the international community can no longer be complacent about the lack of movement within the Conference. If we continue to maintain the status quo, this body runs the risk of not only becoming irrelevant but also being overtaken by events. Indeed, the only thing that undermines the credibility of the Conference is its continued failure to negotiate.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. In my view, your statement is very timely and thoughtful, and I hope it will give a gentle nudge to the Conference to move forward in the right direction.

I now recognize the representative of the delegation of Finland.

Mr. Järviäho (Finland): On behalf of Ambassador Kairamo, the Co-Chair of the informal working group on a programme of work, I would like to inform delegations of our plans regarding the informal group's meeting to be held on Friday, 19 June, at 10 a.m., in cooperation with the Myanmar presidency.

In terms of substance, the meeting will begin with a presentation by the secretariat of the Office of Disarmament Affairs on previous proposals for a programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament. Then, our Australian

colleagues will make a presentation on informal working group consultations held in 2013 and 2014. After these presentations, the floor will be opened for general views on the issue. We encourage all delegations to take active part in this debate and express their views.

The President: I thank the representative from the delegation of Finland. Is there any other delegation who would like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

In the light of my consultations, I would like to invite all delegations at this plenary meeting to share their views on the methods of work of the Conference on Disarmament. In order to have a fruitful and open discussion, I suggest that we suspend the formal deliberations and move to an informal setting. We will resume the formal deliberations later on. I see no objections.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: I would like us to resume our formal plenary meeting.

In line with the schedule of activities now published as document CD/2021, this coming Thursday, that is 18 June, we will continue to meet in this room, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m., in informal plenary for agenda items 1 and 2, with a general focus on nuclear disarmament.

The informal working group established by the decision contained in document CD/2022 will meet this coming Friday, 19 June, at 10 a.m. sharp. As the Yemen talks are ongoing, the secretariat will inform us about the venue through announcements on the website.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held next Tuesday, 23 June, at 10 a.m. sharp.

This concludes our meeting of today. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.